

Excerpts regarding DOD Exemptions from Environmental Laws from the Senate EPW Hearing February 26, 2003 on the President's 2004 Budget for the Environmental Protection Agency. Christine Todd Whitman testifying.

Warner: (1:23:00) The military implication of ranges that we have, the training ranges other operational areas that we have with our military particularly at this time, madam administrator, when we're at absolute peak up tempo of training a preparing our people to take on some are possibly extraordinary missions. They're taking them on now, but others are looming in the future. Somehow we have got to resolve how these ranges can be operated 24 hours a day 365 days a year, madam, that's not incompatible with the environment. I hope, perhaps, to do it by exception maybe naming a range here and there because it's taking up this nation so long to get the body of environmental laws in place, I'm reluctant to try and change them just to protect the military and it's operation at bases. I don't have any specific plan at this time, but working with my colleague, who fortunately also serves on the committee on armed services, we will approach the president and the administration with what we hope is a solution, and hopefully the department of defense will either join or have a better idea. We've gotta move out on that, and we've gotta move out quickly because otherwise we're not being fair to these young men and women in uniform who've got to go out and accept the risks of military service. So, that's coming down the pike, so to speak. You have a comment on it?

Whitman: (1:25:09) I'd be delighted to comment on it, Senator. We have been working very closely with the department of defense and I don't believe that there is a training mission anywhere in the county that is being held up or not taking place because of Environmental Protection Regulation. I know there have been concerns on End. Spp., and not from EPA's perspective, but the dept. of interior's perspective on invasive species, and I know the department of interior is working very closely with the department of defense also to ensure that they work out something that recognizes the need that we have to provide adequate training to the men and women in our armed forces, so that we never put them in jeopardy. I believe firmly that we can move forward in a way that is also protective of the environment. Where we get more into more of an involvement with the department of defense is the clean up, after they have been at a range – after they have used a range. And we do need to be protective of the communities around, we need to be protective of the waterways and of the air and we continue to work closely with them. We believe that those protections are important protections, but at this point in time, I'm not aware of a—any particular area where environmental protection regulations are preventing the desired training.

Warner: (1:26:30) Thank you. That's too much generality into the functions of the oversight of interior and the oversight of your administration, so we will work in this area.

Inhofe: (1:37:30) Let me just share a thought with you, in response to the question asked by Senator Warner. We're both very much interested in the encroachment problems on our ranges, and you are right when you say it's mostly Endangered Species problems. In the case of Camp Pendleton, we're going to be down to about 30% use of the training area because of various Endangered Species. We're having the same problem at Camp Lejune (sic) as well as Fort Bragg and many others. I could talk for a long time about that and it is critical because we're talking about American lives, but I think there are some areas that we might be looking at in your purview which would be for example in the Viacas (sic) Range. One of the problems we had there is the lawsuits having to do with alleged health problems from the air which caused, that were partially responsible for closing that live range. Then, at the Adar (sic) Range in Kuwait, there were, and I'm going from memory now, there were 5 deaths, 4 of whom were Americans, and the report shows clearly that it was because they didn't have proper training on the ranges. So this is a life and death issue that is not so much having to do with you, but it's one that we need to be looking beyond just Endangered Species.